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Secretary Norton Designates the Bethania Historic District in North Carolina as a National Historic Landmark

WASHINGTON-- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today announced the designation of the Bethania Historic District in Bethania, N.C., as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). The Bethania Historic District is one of 15 sites recommended to the Secretary by the National Park System Advisory Board for their national significance in American history and culture.

The 15 new NHLs also include the Sheldon Jackson School, Sitka, Alaska; Fresno Sanitary Landfill, Fresno, Calif.; Samuel Wadsworth Russell House, Middletown, Conn.; Nicholas Jarrot Mansion, Cahokia, Ill.; S.R. Crown Hall, Chicago, Ill.; J.C. Lore Oyster House, Solomons, Md.; Gibson House, Boston, Mass.; Dutch Reformed Church, Newburgh, N.Y.; *Modesty*, West Sayville, N.Y.; Rudolph Oyster House, West Sayville, N.Y.; Merchants' Exchange Building, Philadelphia, Pa.; Randolph Field Historic District, Bexar County, Texas; New Kent School and George W. Watkins School, New Kent County, Va.; and John Philip Sousa Jr. High School, Washington, D.C.

"These special sites underscore our heritage and tell stories of periods and events in our history," Norton said. "By preserving these unique sites, we share our culture and rich diversity with our children for future generations to learn from and enjoy."

NHLs are identified by theme and special studies prepared or overseen by National Park Service (NPS) historians and archaeologists. The NPS often conducts NHL studies in partnership with federal, state, tribal or local preservation officials; the academic community; independent scholars; and others knowledgeable about a particular subject.

"National Historic Landmarks guide us in comprehending important trends and patterns in American history," said Mainella. "The Bethania Historic District possesses those exceptional qualities that help us as a Nation illuminate and understand our complex national heritage."

The town of Bethania, as originally laid out in 1759, consisted of twenty-four residential lots surrounded by an integrated and extensive system of "outlots." Both the outlots and the residential lots were contained within a "Town Lot" allocated to Bethania by the Moravian church. The area of outlots, in tandem with the residential lots, illustrates the agricultural patterns of the Bethania Town Lot, a rare example of a German, "open field" agricultural village. The Bethania Town Lot, when studied in its entirety, is also a significant example of Moravian community planning and development. Bethania is the sole example of an open field agricultural village in the six colonial Moravian Town Lots of Wachovia.

Most NHLs are owned by private individuals or groups. Others are owned by local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies, or may have mixed public-private ownership. Owners of NHLs are free to manage their property as they choose, provided no federal license, permit, or funding is involved. The owner agrees to observe simple preservation precepts with respect to the property and receives technical advice and assistance from preservation experts if needed.

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Landmark designation offers advantages to owners who wish to preserve their properties. A bronze plaque bearing the name of the NHL and attesting to its national significance is presented to the owner upon request. NHL owners may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available, and federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation as well as other provisions may apply.

The historic importance of potential landmarks is evaluated by the NPS and by the National Park System Advisory Board during meetings held twice a year that are open to the public. The Advisory Board includes citizens who are national and community leaders in the conservation of natural, historic, and cultural areas. Recommendations by the Advisory Board are made to the Secretary of the Interior on potential NHLs. Final decisions regarding NHL designations are made by the Secretary. Additional information on the National Historic Landmark program can be found on the NPS website at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/landmarks.htm>, or by contacting Carol Shull at (202)343-9504 or John Sprinkle at (202) 343-8166.

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